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1/24/72

Dear Paul,

I have read the Olson-Turner piece from the Journal of Forensic Sciences with disgust and contempt. Because you know and may see Olson, I write briefly so that, if it does not embarrass you to do so, you may express this, which is actually a rather moderate representation of what I do feel.

This thing, which is to say almost all of it that is credible, what has not been distorted by selective quotation, what disproves being with some care omitted, is an overt plagiarism and I do not trouble you with the source that is obvious to anyone who knows the literature. Nothing essential has been added to it and the acknowledgements, so called, rather than relieve it, make it specific. We all knew this in advance. I also recall making some pointed comments when so long ago I read a draft.

The dishonesty is even more apparent when one considers what is footnoted and how. In context it is little better than an effort to make a plagiarism seem like something other than that and scholarly. When you credit wrongly in a footnote you are pretty ignored or pretty crooked. In this case I am without doubt in making a choice.

Much worse than this is the extreme care taken to cover the Commission and the FBI. This begins in the very first paragraph, where the government is credited with "careful" efforts. This can be true of only its great care to deceive, which is exactly opposite what Don and his fink prof say.

Aside from this there are the kinds of errors that sometimes sneak into a work despite our best efforts. However, in a piece as short as this, not anything like the problem one faces with a book, such things as saying that Willis took only six pictures, or what is no better, saying that six of them are important in this scribbling, is hard to explain.

There is an undeniable compulsion to want to do something. But when one has contributed the great big O that Don has, aside from the bad, for which I'd think he'd prefer no credit, it is entirely disreputable to take the work and the entire theory of the work from the published without so saying and then specifying any disagreement that comes from legitimate original work. In this sense also the so-called acknowledgements serve dishonest purposes, to make it seem that the work is original and not a theft.

We will all be better off if the Olsons and Turners now tell themselves that the world is so much better because of their enormous efforts and retire to the contemplation of honest things, like helping frame the innocent and counting the fairies.

The tragedy is that what little was not in the source from which this was so openly stolen, not counting what is wrongly credited as the original work of another when Don, personally, had to know this was false, is actually subject to rather persuasive disproof for which one need be neither a criminologist nor a physicist nor a lawyer. What better forum for a mixture of thievery and readily-established misinterpretation, to say nothing of selective quotation, than the forensic scientists?

But I am learning about what constitutes scholarship today and how one gets ahead in what one pretends is one's chosen profession. Mrs. Warren's was more honorable.

Don need not write me and if he does I will not waste the time to answer. My sole purpose is to make a record.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg